

CONSTITUTION OF

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH OF NORTHERN COLORADO

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This organization shall be known as Reformed Baptist Church of Northern Colorado, incorporated under the laws of the State of Colorado.

ARTICLE I ~ OUR VISION

Section 1. WHO WE ARE

Historically, Baptists have been Calvinistic and Reformed in their theology, tracing their organized roots to the British Separatists and the Puritans of the 17th Century. The last half of the 19th century saw a great departure among the Baptists from their historical theological roots towards a more man-centered, humanistic belief and practice. This was due to German rationalism and a widespread Arminian theology. Not all departed. A few remained faithful and prayed for the day when the whole counsel of God would again be believed and proclaimed in all churches, especially Baptist churches. During the first and middle parts of the 20th century, the Lord God was pleased to turn the hearts of some godly men back to the biblical and theological foundations of our forefathers. They wrote extensively, challenged church leaders and laymen alike, and prayed. This gave rise to the modern Reformed Baptist movement.

While we believe that Baptists can be traced back to Scripture, Reformed Baptists as a distinct group with an articulate theology have deep roots going all the way back to the Protestant Reformation and, in some instances, have connections predating the Reformation. Reformed Baptist Church of Northern Colorado is a part of this

movement. We are committed to proclaiming the message of the law and gospel through the Bible's methods of preaching and sacrament. With all of the first generation Reformers, we believe deeply in the doctrines of grace and their emphasis on God's sovereignty in salvation by faith alone through grace alone because of Christ alone. We desire to do everything for the purpose of glorifying God's holy name who has been so kind as to save for himself sinful people fully undeserving of his blessing and mercy.

Section 2. OUR PURPOSE

To glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Section 3. OUR MISSION

To engraft the believer into our local organized community of faith by rooting and establishing them in those things that bind Christians together in all places and times: Creed, Communion, and Community with the triune God.

Section 4. OUR VALUES

A. Creed

The Faith Once For All Delivered To The Saints

(Jude 3)

To understand this faith, to internalize it, and to work it out into our daily activity, so that we can pass it down to our children, outweighs every other interest - including the numerical success of the church.

B. Communion

Word and Sacrament

“And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

(Acts 2:42)

The primary focus of our worship is the public reading and exposition of God's Word, and the administration of his sacraments.

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

*“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”
(2 Timothy 2:15)*

Following the pattern of guilt, grace, and gratitude, our sermons are Christ centered, with special care given to correctly distinguish between Law and Gospel.

Form, Order and Reverence in Worship

“ Among those who approach me

I will show myself holy;

in the sight of all the people

I will be honored.’ ”

(Leviticus 10:3)

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God seeks those who worship him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Accordingly, we are called to worship God in an orderly manner (1 Cor. 14:40), “with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:28).” Thus we utilize appropriate and biblically modeled liturgical methods in our worship.

C. Community

Children and Family

“Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him.

(Psalm 127:3)

The Biblical notion of covenant theology, as interpreted by the historic Reformed Baptist tradition, provides us with a solid theological basis from which to discuss marriage, family, children and other personal relationships within the church.

Friendship and Comradery

“Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another.”

(Hebrews 10:23-25)

We also enjoy fellowship in unstructured opportunities of lighthearted conversation. The conversation stimulates us to greater fellowship with God and is done with the utmost kindness, love, and gentle regard for our fellow Christians.

Accountability

“Therefore... we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.”

(Hebrews 12:1)

We belong to a denomination because we believe that the biblical pattern for ministry demands “checks and balances” and a structure of accountability higher than ourselves. We do not believe “lone ranger” Christianity is appropriate for God’s people. Creeds, confessions, a catechism and a historic liturgy link us to other believers not only in this time and place, but across time, geographical boundaries and cultures.

Sharing our Faith

“Always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”

(1 Peter 3:15)

In addition to growing in our own understanding of the faith, the Scriptures exhort us to share it with those outside the church. We must not only be prepared to give to everyone an answer for the hope that we have (1 Peter

3:15), but we must be zealous to see that our non-Christian friends, families and neighbors hear the message of Christ crucified (Romans 10:14-15) with the prayerful and confident expectation that God will be pleased to call many to faith in His Dear Son through the ministry of Reformed Baptist Church of Northern Colorado.

Good News to the Poor.

The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

(Matthew 11:5)

We will develop new strategies for proclaiming the all-satisfying supremacy of God's love and justice to the poor through 1) personal involvement; 2) a welcoming atmosphere; 3) local missionary strategies of urban disciple making; and 4) equipping missionaries for unreached urban peoples.

ARTICLE II ~ ARTICLES OF FAITH

Section 1. SCRIPTURE ALONE

The Holy Bible, consisting of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, is the sole source of written divine revelation, which alone can bind the conscience. The Bible alone teaches all that is necessary for our salvation from sin and is the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured.

Section 2. HISTORIC STATEMENTS OF FAITH

Early church: Nevertheless, this church will stand in that great tradition of thought which comes to us out of the early church and reformation periods. With this in mind we warmly embrace the **Apostles' Creed**, the **Nicean Creed**, the **Definition of Chalcedon** and the **Canons of the Council of Orange** as early statements of true Christian faith.

Reformation: We regard the reformed documents, the **London Baptist Confession of 1689** (in the full sense), the **Canons of Dort** (excluding Article 17 of the first head of doctrine) and the **Baptist Catechism** as excellent, though not inspired expressions of the teaching of the Word of God.

Contemporary: We also embrace the recent **Cambridge Declaration** and **The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy** as contemporary confirmations of this great Christian faith. We adopt each of these to be an assistance in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness.

ARTICLE III ~ MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: THE NATURE AND PURPOSE

- A. *Definition*: Local church membership is a covenant to serve and to provide mutual accountability as prescribed in scripture.
- B. *Warrant for Membership*: All Christians automatically become members of the Universal Church (Mat. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:25-33, Col. 1:18; Heb. 12:22-23) at the time of conversion (Acts 2:46). God has ordained that local assemblies of believers represent him in their own distinct geographical regions. Duties of these local congregations include regularly meeting together for mutual encouragement in the faith (Heb. 10:25), upholding the unity of the Spirit through a common creed (Eph. 4:3-6), partaking of the Lord's Supper as one body of believers (1 Cor. 10:17), and the discipline of wayward believers in the local community (1 Cor. 5:5,9; 1 Tim. 1:20).

Furthermore, the New Testament presents the local church as a distinct group of individuals which could:

- i. be counted (Acts 2:41-42; 4:4)
- ii. Be added to (Acts 2:47; 5:14)
- iii. be called upon to select leaders and representatives from among itself (Acts 6:1-6; 2 Cor. 8:19, 23; Acts 15:22)
- iv. be officially gathered together (Acts 14:27; 15:22)
- v. carry out church discipline (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:4, 13; 2 Cor. 2:6)

While local church membership is not explicitly taught in Scripture, it is implicitly taught in Scripture and may be deduced by sound argument from Scripture. These forgoing biblical arguments along with common sense rules of order familiar to all types of select groups as are common to people everywhere provide good reasons to use membership in the local church.

Membership allows believers to formally declare their mutual commitment to a particular body. It allows mutual accountability to take place on a voluntary basis. It affords the church the ability to discipline immoral behavior or heretical teaching in a way it could not without membership. It creates a common identity of a local community that is stronger for its mutual beliefs that does not exist where such agreement is missing. It creates a structure for the propagation and maintenance of leadership which will guide and direct the church through voting privileges among believers who truly are committed to the local church and are in agreement with its doctrine and vision.

Without some sort of formal, open, solemn, voluntary and enduring commitment to the local church on the part of her people, such biblically mandated acts of the local body of believers would be difficult if not impossible to carry out. The church must not allow herself to follow the cultural flirtation of an antiestablishment worldview that sees no room for commitments and covenants between two parties to be entered into or maintained. God has entered into covenant with his people. Therefore, covenantally based membership is appropriate for the local church.

C. The procedures of membership outlined below are designed solely for the purpose of maintaining scriptural and accountable local church government (Hebrews 13:17), such that our affairs are conducted in decency and order (1 Corinthians 14:40). In no way is our understanding and practice of membership to be construed in such a way as to disrupt our Christian unity and fellowship with true saints who attend church elsewhere (Galatians 3:28; 1 Corinthians 3:1-4).

D. There is a difference between being a regular attender of RBCNC and being a member of RBCNC. It is expected that regular attenders will participate in the following:

- i. Regular and frequent attendance of church worship and meetings (Acts 20:7; Hebrews 10:24-25).
- ii. Participation in selected areas of ministry by serving as determined by the Elders (Romans 12:4-6; 1 Peter 4:10-11).
- iii. Participation in the ministry through biblical financial contribution (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
 - a. The motive for giving in the New Testament age is response to Christ's redemptive love for us, which brings us to care for others (1 John 3:16-18). The amount given is in accordance to a person's ability (Acts 11:29), and as the Lord has prospered (1 Cor.16:2). This also governs the frequency of giving. The rich are able to give of their abundance in readiness. The poor give out of their poverty, sacrificially.
 - b. The New Testament principle is giving from the heart, cheerfully, out of love and in light of Christ's sacrifice (2 Cor.8:9). We must give in secret in order that the Father who sees in secret may reward us openly. The Bible teaches those who sow sparingly will reap sparingly and those who sow abundantly will reap abundantly (2 Cor. 9:6).
- iv. Receiving the Lord's Supper regularly and frequently (Luke 22:19-20). **However, see Article 4; Section 3 on the Lord's Supper.**
- v. Understanding of and commitment to the vision and beliefs of RBCNC (See Articles 1 and 2) (Philippians 2:1-2).

- vi. Willingness to submit to the spiritual leadership of the elders of the church as they submit to God and the scriptures (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5).
- vii. A desire to be held accountable by the church, including church discipline if necessary (Proverbs 18:1; James 5:16-19).

E. Members make a formal commitment and covenant to RBCNC. This formal covenant and commitment includes Section D para. (i to vii). Additionally, members are entitled to:

- i. Vote.
- ii. Participate in service in all areas of the Church as defined hereinafter and subject to the Biblical qualifications referenced in the appropriate sections.
 - a. Occupy the official offices of the Church.
 - b. While all attenders have a desire to be held accountable, Members have covenanted that they agree to be held accountable.

SECTION 2: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

A. Before being accepted as members of RBCNC, applicants must:

- i. Be baptized believers in Jesus Christ.
- ii. Live a life-style that does not contradict their profession of faith.
- iii. Demonstrate evidence of commitment, participation and financial contribution to the ministry at RBCNC.
- iv. Be in substantial agreement with the articles of faith of RBCNC. Any disagreements must be brought before the Elders before membership will be permitted.
- v. Be willing to submit to the government of this church.
- vi. Apply for membership by:
 - a) Reading and concurring with the material on membership at RBCNC provided by the elders, including Article “GOVERNMENT” of the church's bylaws.
 - b) Completing an application for membership.

- c) Interviewing with two of the elders or pastors of the church.
- B. Once accepted as members, applicants will sign the church roll sheet and will be acknowledged as members in an appropriate manner.

Section 3: TYPES OF MEMBERS

A. Regular Members

All who are received into the membership of the church and who do not come under the corrective discipline of the church as set forth in section 6, shall be considered regular members in good standing and entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership in the church (Acts 2:37-47).

B. Associate Members

Members of other churches who come to live in our area for a limited period of time (e.g., students, military personnel, persons on special work assignments) may be received into or removed from the membership of the church on the same basis and in the same manner as persons who have permanent residence in our geographical area. Such a person need not be released from the membership of his "home church" but will be regarded as an associate member while in our midst, enjoying all the privileges, performing all the duties, and submitting to all the liabilities of regular membership. When such a person terminates their period of temporary residence, they will be released to the fellowship of their "home church" and no longer be regarded as a member of this church (compare: Acts 18:27; Rom. 16:1,2; 2 Cor. 3:1f; Col. 4:10; 3 John 5-10). If such a person decides to live in our area permanently and to end his membership in the former "home church", they may request that they be regarded as a regular member of this church. Such regular membership will begin once his membership in the former "home church" has ended. A letter will be sent to the "home church" informing it of the new status of all who begin or end associate membership in this church.

Section 4: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: DISMISSALS

Membership shall be terminated in the following ways:

- A. Request by member to be dropped.
- B. A name may be dropped from membership for non-participation after appropriate efforts to restore fellowship and participation have failed. The length of time of non-participation that warrants dismissal shall be determined by the discretion and good judgment of the elders.
- C. The elders may dismiss a member as an act of discipline. (See Section 6.)
- D. A member's name shall be dropped from the membership roll upon the event of that member's death.

Section 5: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: VOTING MEMBERSHIP

Each member shall be entitled to one vote in matters that call for a decision of the membership.

Section 6: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: DISCIPLINE

A. The Nature of Discipline

- i. Discipline is a censure or correction that is required of the church by Scripture. The goal of church discipline is not punitive, but corrective, desiring always to see Christians repent of sin and be restored into full fellowship with the Body of Christ. Corrective discipline becomes necessary when heretical doctrine or disorderly, immoral, or scandalous conduct appears among the members of the church.
- ii. As a general rule and whenever feasible, an effort must be made to resolve difficulty, correct error, and remove offense through counsel and admonition before more drastic steps are taken (Gal. 6:1; James 5:19, 20). The principles given to us in Matt. 18:15-16, Rom. 16:17-20, 1 Cor. 5:1-13, 2 Thess. 3:6-15, 1 Tim. 5:19-20, and Titus 3:10 must be carefully followed and applied to each and every case of corrective discipline as appropriate. In some cases public admonition and/or public repentance may be warranted (Matt. 18:17; 1 Tim. 5:20). In the most extreme cases excommunication from the membership of the church may be necessary (Matt. 18:17; Rom. 16:17-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 1 Tim. 1:20; Titus 3:10). All the members of the church are obliged to submit to and enforce as appropriate the decision of the church in acts of corrective discipline.
- iii. Since the church is a spiritual and religious institution, the punishments inflicted by the church in corrective discipline (2 Cor. 6:7) are also spiritual. They include public verbal reproof (Matt. 18:17; 1 Tim. 5:20), social avoidance (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:9-11; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14), suspension from the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 5:11), and removal from the membership of the church (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:13). They are intended to effect repentance through a sense of sorrow and shame (2 Cor. 2:7; 2 Thess. 3:14). The church has no right, however, to confiscate goods, revoke conjugal rights, or inflict corporal punishment of any kind. Nevertheless, a member guilty of criminal actions may be delivered to the civil authorities according to the rule of Scripture (1 Pet. 4:15).
- iv. The goals of corrective discipline are always the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church (1 Cor. 5:6) and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender (1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 2:5-8; 1 Tim. 5:20).

B. The Motivation for Discipline

- i. The spiritual welfare of the church. The church must purge out those elements that will bring reproach on Christ and His church (1 Corinthians 5).
- ii. The spiritual welfare of individuals who are called to hold others accountable. We bring judgment on ourselves if we do not discipline those who should be disciplined (Ezekiel 33:7-9).
- iii. The spiritual welfare of individuals who are in sin. Though difficult and painful, biblical discipline is one of God's appointed means of delivering a person from sin (1 Corinthians 5:4-5, Hebrews 12:5-6, Proverbs 13:24).

C. The carrying out of discipline will be done in accordance with the Policies and Procedures Manual of RBCNC attached as **Appendix #1**. As part of the covenant voluntarily entered into, all potential members must agree to read, understand, and abide by the manual before their acceptance membership will be considered.

ARTICLE IV ~ SACRAMENTS

Section 1. GENERAL STATEMENT

- A. It is by faith alone that we share in Christ and all his benefits. This faith originates as the Holy Spirit creates it in our hearts by the preaching of the holy gospel and as he confirms it by the use of the holy Sacraments. We are not to be afraid of sounding unbiblical or fear that we are Roman Catholic because we use the Latin term “sacrament” which means *mystery*. The term “Trinity” is not in the Scripture, yet the concept surely is. The same is true of the sacraments.
- B. A sacrament is a visible, holy sign and seal instituted by God (Rom. 4:11) in order that by their use he may the more fully disclose and seal to us the promise of the gospel, namely, that because of the one sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the cross he graciously grants us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Sacraments are the gospel to our mouth, nose, and hands as preaching is to our ears. When they are accompanied by the message of the gospel, they picture the good news in physical form.
- C. Sacraments do not save. That is, they are not means of “special grace.” Instead, they are special “means of grace.” God works through ordinary means because he knows that our faith is not perfect, but is weak. Sacraments are channels and aids through which preexistent faith is confirmed and strengthened. Both the Word and the Sacraments are designed to direct our faith by the power of the Holy Spirit to the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation.

- D. There are two sacraments commanded in the New Testament. Christ instituted Baptism (Mat. 28:19) and the Lord's Supper (Mat. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).

Section 2. BAPTISM

- A. Only confessed followers of our Lord Jesus Christ are proper candidates for Baptism. Following the biblical model, baptism is to take place *as soon as possible* after a conscience point of confession and faith. Baptism is identification with the universal church (Acts 8:36-38) and the visible/local church (Acts 2:41), and is never used in the Bible as a means of testing whether or not a person is really serious about their profession. Baptism is also not a means of seeing if the recipient knows all of their theology. If the person knows enough that they are saved, then they know enough that they are to be baptized. The seriousness of a profession of faith is properly regulated by church membership and discipline (the churches means of maintaining order and purity of action), not by baptism (God's means of strengthening our faith).
- B. Baptism in water is the physical ritual that points towards the spiritual reality that God has already united the person with Christ into His death, burial, and resurrection, This physical reality is the door of entrance into the visible community of the people of God (Acts 2:41). Therefore, we shall receive into the membership of the church only Christians who have been baptized (Matt. 28:19). This is not legalistic, but it necessary in order to maintain a credible profession to the world that we take the law of God seriously in matters of worship and faith.
- C. Immersion in water is the normal mode of baptism. It is preferred for its due administration. But if enough water is not available to immerse, in order to follow the biblical model or repenting and being baptized immediately, other modes of baptism may be permitted.

Section 3. THE LORD'S SUPPER

- A. Whereas Baptism is the initiatory ordinance in which each believer should participate, and should be observed only once by each believer, the Lord's Supper should be celebrated frequently by the assembled church (1 Cor. 11:26). As a means of grace, it never gets old, boring, or taken for granted by frequent use for the same reason that preaching, as a means of grace, never gets old, boring, or taken for granted. This would only be true of either if God actually did nothing special through them. Therefore, in order that we might joyfully participate corporately in Christ's benefits as much as possible, the Lord's Supper will be celebrated by this church weekly.
- B. Only Baptized Christians may participate in the sacrament because it is a proclamation of the death of Christ (Exo. 12:43; 1 Cor. 11:26), which is something that unbelievers cannot truly proclaim. Again, this is not

legalistic, but is done in order to follow the universal testimony of Scripture that a person is saved, then baptized (immediately), and then partakes of the Supper of with the church. It is preferred that those who partake in the meal be members in good standing in a *true* church of Jesus Christ. This is preferred because we believe that biblical membership is the best means of holding Christians accountable to their profession of faith with another body of believers.

However, we realize that membership is not the test of true faith. Therefore, if one is not a member of a church, they should explain to at least one elder of RBCNC before partaking, why it is that they are not a member of a church and yet why they consider themselves to be Christian. In this way, RBCNC will be upholding its God given responsibility to maintain as much as finite humans can, the purity of the sacrament as it takes the warnings associated with the meal (1 Cor. 11:27, 30) seriously, as it maintains biblical guidelines that a person demonstrate the seriousness of their profession (Exo 12:43; 1 Cor. 11:22, 26), and as it prevents unbelievers from bringing judgment upon themselves by proclaiming something they cannot possibly proclaim by faith (1 Cor. 11:26; 31-32). The Supper is a serious spiritual meal for believers and therefore we want it taken seriously by those in this church.

C. This is a most holy ordinance and should be observed with solemnity and dignity (1 Cor. 11:21 - they did not take it seriously!). Yet, even though sinful people may abuse the elements (1 Cor. 11:21 - they got *drunk* during communion!), this does not give us the right to change them to our own self-created elements. We are only permitted what is commanded in Scripture in the worship of God. The proper biblical elements must be used in its correct administration (Ex. 12:17-20; Mat. 26:29).

D. Because the Lord's Supper was celebrated in biblical times as the Passover *feast* (Mat. 26:19-20; 1 Cor. 5:8, 10:21), RBCNC will celebrate Holy Communion as the Passover dinner feast to be eaten at the table no less than once a year. This will take place on a special Sunday night service of the churches choosing. Great care will be taken by the members of the church to prepare themselves before hand for this Holy and delightful celebration of our Lord's death and resurrection. The feast will be observed according to the commands given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. We do this to honor the Scriptural teaching about Communion as the New Covenant *supper* and to remind ourselves that Communion is truly to be a meal, taken together as the body of Christ.

Article V ~ CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Section 1. GENERAL STATEMENT

The Lord Jesus Christ alone is The Supreme Head of this church. Following His direction and guidance, this church undertakes to manage its own affairs under the government and rule of the inerrant Word of God alone. It is particularly guided by

the practices of the churches of the New Testament and under the oversight of God appointed Elders (Acts 14:23).

Section 2. ELDERS AND DEACONS

Jesus Christ has ordained, according to the Holy Bible, that His local churches should be blessed with the spiritual rule and ministry of Elders and the supportive ministry of Deacons. The congregation shall seek to identify these gifted men and make nominations to the Eldership. Upon the unanimous approval and recommendation of the Elders, they shall be formally recognized as such by a 67% congregational vote.

Section 3. FORMAL RECOGNITION

A short time after the congregational vote, a special portion of a regular Lord's Day worship service shall be allotted in which the officer bearers shall be recognized and set apart by laying on of hands and prayer. Also according to Scripture, the ordination of Elders shall be preceded by a period of fasting, after which the church shall submit to the Elders' rule and ministry (Acts 14:23; Hebrews 13:17; I Thessalonians 5:12,13).

- A. The Elders shall have general oversight of all the church, its ministry and functions. They are responsible for the spiritual ministrations and rule of the church, for the implementation of church discipline, and for watching over the souls of the members. All Elders must discharge their duties as set forth in Acts 20:28-30, I Peter 5:1-4, and Hebrews 13:7,17 . Anyone desiring the office of an Elder must evidence the personal, domestic and ministerial qualifications as set forth in the Scriptures (I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9). While every Elder bears spiritual rule and must be "able to teach", some will be more exclusively engaged in the details of ruling, rather than teaching (I Timothy 5:17). If at any time any Elder is not able to conscientiously affirm his agreement with the Confession as agreement is described in **Appendix #1 "What is Full Subscription"** and Constitution of this church he must make this known to his fellow Elders.
- B. All Elders are Pastors and are equal in power, authority and rule. Within the parity of the eldership there is diversity. Thus, some Elders are specifically set apart for prayer and ministry of the Word and shall, as far as possible, be adequately maintained in material necessities by the church so as to be disentangled from the cares of a secular calling. Such a Pastor, being by biblical teaching, a "teaching ruling Elder", must likewise evidence the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications as set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 . Anyone called to this office must be able to conscientiously affirm his agreement with the Confession as agreement is described in **Appendix #1 "What is Full Subscription"** and Constitution of this church. If at any time he cannot do so, he must make this known to his fellow Elders, and if he is the only Elder, then he must make this known to the church.

- C. The Deacons are responsible for the business and other practical affairs of the church, which affairs are to be administered with spiritual grace and in subjection to the Eldership. Deacons must evidence the qualifications of the office as set forth in I Timothy 3:8-13. Anyone called to this office must be able to conscientiously affirm his agreement with the Confession as agreement is described in **Appendix #1 “What is Full Subscription”** and Constitution of this church. If at any time he cannot do so, he must make this known to the Elders, and if no Elders exist, then he must make this known to the church.
- D. Having the approval of the Elders, all office bearers shall be elected to said offices at a congregational meeting. It should be the desire of the congregation to come to one mind regarding those office bearers to whom they must submit in the Lord. All officers shall be elected indefinitely. Office bearers can be removed from office because of holding and teaching false doctrine or for conduct that is contrary to the Scriptures. Before voting on removing an officer, evidence of efforts to counsel and evidence of either doctrinal, moral or performance deficiencies must be made available to the congregation. No less than a 90% majority of the members present and voting shall be required for the removal of an office bearer.

Article VI ~ CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

Section 1. CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

All congregational meetings shall be called and conducted by the Elders. There will be one scheduled business meeting at the beginning of each year. The purpose of this meeting will be to give an accounting for and a review of the previous year. The annual business meeting will address our current financial situation, set goals for the coming year and will allow for a time of questioning from the congregation. Other congregational meetings necessary for church business will be announced at least one week prior to the meeting. However, in the case of unusual circumstances, a church meeting may be called by the Elders without the one-week notice. In such cases, the Elders will make every reasonable attempt to notify all members of such a meeting. All members should regard their presence at a duly called business meeting with the same seriousness with which they would regard their attendance at a stated meeting for worship.

Section 2. SPECIAL MEETINGS

A congregational meeting may also be called when 10 members or 1/3 of the members (whichever is less) make a written request for such a meeting. This request along with subject matter must be set forth in writing with the signatures of 10 members in good standing and must be presented to the Elders, who shall in turn make the proper announcement of the meeting.

Section 3. QUORUM

Sixty-six percent (66%) of the members qualified to vote shall constitute a quorum. This quorum is required in all voting matters.

Section 4. VOTING PERCENTAGES

It shall be our goal to prayerfully discern the mind of God so that in all matters of church business it may be said of us as it was said of that church business meeting recorded in Acts 6, "*the saying pleased the whole multitude.*" However, in such a situation where this unanimity is not realized, no less than a 3/4 majority of those voting will make a resolution valid, except where a different proportionate vote is stipulated in the Constitution.

ARTICLE VII ~ RITES OF ORDINATION

Section 1. PRINCIPLES OF ORDINATION

A candidate for ordination recognizes that only our Sovereign, Holy God can truly call and ordain His children for service in the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The calling of a minister is not the result of a title; rather the title is a result of his calling. This calling is recognized as from the True and Living God. It is man's privilege and specifically the privilege of the overseers of the true Church of Jesus Christ to ratify the ordination of God when such is obviously placed upon a man's life.

The purpose of this Article is to provide for the ordination rites of ministers of the Gospel at Reformed Baptist Church of Northern Colorado.

Section 2. QUALIFICATIONS FOR ORDINATION

- A.** A candidate for ordination must be a "born again" believer in Jesus Christ as described by our Lord in the third chapter of the Gospel of John.
- B.** A candidate for ordination must subscribe to the Confession of faith as described in the Preamble of these Bylaws.
- C.** A candidate must have completed a masters degree from seminary or the equivalent as designated by the Elders.
- D.** A candidate should have evidenced the obvious calling of God upon his life to the satisfaction of the Elders.

Section 3: PROCEDURE FOR ORDINATION

- A.** Each person fulfilling the above qualifications, and upon their presentation to the Elders of this body, will receive full consideration for ordination into the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by RBCNC.
- B.** The Elders may make exceptions to these qualifying standards where, in the unanimous opinion of the Elders and under the strong compelling conviction of the Holy Spirit, such exception is according to the will of God and consistent with His Word.

C. Upon unanimous approval of the Elders, the candidate will be ordained as a minister of the Gospel with the right to perform ministerial functions in accordance with the laws of the land and the ordinances of God's Holy Word, with all prerogatives of such a calling and office.

D. All candidates, successful or otherwise, will be notified of the Elder's decision in writing within one (1) week of that decision.

ARTICLE VIII ~ AUXILIARIES

Any organization, group, or club whose membership is primarily for a church activity, shall be considered an auxiliary of the church and shall be subject to the constitution and Bylaws of the church. As an auxiliary organization it shall exist only in cooperation with the Corporate Board of Directors.

ARTICLE IX ~ AMENDMENT OF BYLAWS

The Bylaws may be amended or repealed and new Bylaws adopted with the unanimous approval of the Elders.

ARTICLE X ~ ANNUAL ACCOUNTING AND FINANCIAL PROCEDURES

Section 1: FINANCIAL YEAR

This church shall operate on a calendar year from January 1 through December 31.

Section 2: MEANS OF SUPPORT

This church shall be supported through the tithes and offerings of its members and friends.

ARTICLE XI ~ MISCELLANEOUS

Section 1: EXECUTION OF DOCUMENTS

The Elders may authorize by majority vote any officer or officers, agent or agents, to enter into any contract or execute any instrument in the name of, and on behalf of the church and such authority may be general or confined to specific instances. Unless so authorized, no officer, agent or other person shall have any power or authority to bind the church by any contract or engagement or to pledge its credit or to render it liable for any purpose or to any amount.

Section 2: INSPECTION OF BYLAWS

The church shall keep in its principal office the original or a copy of its Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, as amended to date, certified by the Secretary, which shall be open to inspection by the members at all reasonable times during the office hours.

Section 3: CONSTRUCTION OF DEFINITIONS

Unless the context otherwise requires, the general provisions, rules of construction and definitions shall be based on Colorado Law.

Section 4: RULES OF ORDER

The rules contained in Robert's Rules of Order, revised, shall be the general guide to govern all business Board meetings of the church, except in instances of conflict between said Rules of Order and the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of the church or provisions of law.

Section 5: LIABILITY

No Director, Officer, Elder or Deacon appointed by this church shall be personally or individually liable for any error or mistake, act or omission for, or on behalf of this church, occurring within the scope of his or her duty as such Director, Officer, Elder or Deacon, excepting only for his or her own willful misconduct or violation of law.

Article XII AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this Constitution may be adopted by a 3/4 vote of the congregation at any regular congregational meeting or special meeting called for this purpose, provided in either case that such amendment shall be distributed in written form to the membership at least two weeks prior to such meeting.

APPENDIX #1

What Is “Full Subscription?”

Submitted by Dr. James M. Renihan

Confessional subscription employs three main terms in its nomenclature: absolute, strict/full, and loose. ARBCA has adopted the middle position. According to Dr. Morton H. Smith, “strict or full subscription takes at face value” the terminology used in adopting a confession of faith.

In an article entitled “The Case for Full Subscription” (in *The Practice of Confessional Subscription*, ed. by David Hall, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1995; pages 185-6), Dr. Smith provides some helpful insights [albeit in a Presbyterian context with a much more developed tradition of discussion of the issue than among Baptists]. He says, “Note some things that full subscription does not mean. First, it does not insist that all of the teachings of the Confession . . . are of equal importance (just as not all of the teachings in the Bible are of equal importance). The full subscriptionist recognizes that some doctrines are more foundational than others, in accord with the Biblical example. Positively, the full subscriptionist believes that in professing that the Confession . . . [is] his confession, he is subscribing to all of the doctrines in the Confession . . . they are all part of the system of doctrine Second, full subscription does not require the adoption of every word of the Confession . . . but positively believes that we are adopting every doctrine or teaching of the Confession”

One should note the language found in the agreement signed by the messengers of the founding churches in Mesa, Arizona in March, 1997; in the ARBCA constitution; and in the application for membership. The first states, “We declare that our primary rule of faith and practice is the inerrant Word of God, and adopt as our subordinate standards the excellent document commonly known as the London Baptist Confession of 1689, and the Constitution of this Association.” The second states, “While we hold tenaciously to the inerrant and infallible Word of God as found in the sixty-six books of the Bible (this being our final source of faith and practice), we embrace and adopt the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 as a faithful expression of the doctrine taught in the Scriptures. This Confession is the doctrinal standard of the Association,” and in the third the applying church signs this statement: “We accept the London Confession of Faith of 1689 as an accurate and reliable expression of what the Scriptures teach and the faith we confess.” In each case, the member churches commit themselves to the Confession as a whole. We

maintain the primacy of the Scriptures, and “embrace and adopt” the Confession as a truthful expression of our convictions with regard to the details of Scripture.

Taken at face value, these words imply, even though they do not explicitly state, strict, or full subscription. This does not mean that we treat every doctrine in the Confession as if it were equally important, but we do commit ourselves to all of the doctrines of the Confession. In addition, as Dr. Smith says so well, “full subscription does not require the adoption of every word of the Confession or Catechisms, but positively believes that we are adopting every doctrine or teaching of the Confession or Catechisms.” This is an important distinction, and needs to be understood. It is possible for an individual, a church, or an association to be cautious about the wording used to express a specific doctrine without denying the doctrine that wording seeks to define. Full subscription honestly adopts all of the doctrines expressed in the confessional formulation. In the case of the Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America, this means that by subscribing to the document commonly known as the London Baptist Confession of 1689, we receive all of the doctrines contained in it as true, founded on the Word of God.

APPENDIX 2 ~ POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

Section 1. Church Discipline

- A. The Process of Church Discipline:** The elders of the church will, through teaching and example, encourage the members of the church to discipline themselves and one another in the following ways:
- i. Exercising self-discipline; e.g. applying self-correction (1 Corinthians 11:31).
 - ii. Overlooking, in love, the failings of one another (1 Peter 4:8).
 - iii. Admonishing a brother or sister when necessary (Matthew 18:15).
 - iv. Taking one or two others as witnesses if the personal admonition is rejected (Matthew 18:16).
 - a) In cases of scandalous sin that may bring reproach on Christ and His church, there is no requirement to attempt private resolution of the matter and it should be brought to the elders without delay.
 - v. Bringing the issue to the elders of the church who act as representatives of the church if the previous admonition is rejected (Matthew 18:17).
 - vi. Excommunicating the person under discipline, communicating the same to the membership of the church if the admonition of the elders is rejected (Matthew 18:17, 1 Corinthians 5:4-5, 11-13).
 - vii. Restoring the person under discipline when, in the opinion of the elders, that person has been restored through repentance and rededication or conversion. The elders shall announce the end of the disciplinary action to the church (2 Corinthians 2:5-8).
- B. The Subjects of Discipline**
- i. Non-member attenders. The authority and responsibility of the church to discipline those who have not made a commitment to membership in the church is less than it is regarding members or leaders in the church. Excommunication of non-member attenders may or may not be communicated to the membership of the church (C., 6.), depending on the nature of the issue and the person's influence in the church.

- ii. Members. The authority and responsibility of the church to discipline its members is invited by its members by applying for and being received into membership of the church.
- iii. Leaders. Elders, deacons and trustees have greater responsibility and receive greater honor than other members of the church (1 Timothy 5:17). Therefore they are judged by a higher standard than other members of the church (James 3:1). Because their ministries are public and because their sin can bring greater reproach to Christ and His church, based on the judgment of the elders of the church, they are subject to public rebuke for confirmed sin (1 Timothy 5:19-20).
- iv. Children of members. The elders will exercise disciplinary authority, with children of member households, if necessary, in the following ways:
 - a) If a child of a member of the church, having grown up in a Christian home leaves the household without ever having made a profession of faith, then the elders will solemnly warn the child of the spiritual hazards in rejecting a biblical upbringing, and urge him to repent and believe.
 - b) If a child of a member of the church has professed faith in the Lord and subsequently demonstrates a rebellious spirit, or repudiates his earlier profession of faith, the elders will offer pastoral help to the head of the household as appropriate. If the child persists in a state of rebellion, the elders may initiate the process of church discipline and the child may be excommunicated.
 - c) If the rebellion of a child is of a scandalous nature, and the member parents refuse to cooperate with the church discipline, the elders may initiate the process of church discipline with the member parents.

C. RBCNC Church will honor acts of church discipline carried out biblically in other Christian churches.

D. Types of discipline

i. Public Reproof or Censure

Public reproof consists of a pastoral effort, before the gathered church, to call an impenitent church member to repentance for sin too blatant to be dealt with in an exclusively private manner; or to deal with serious sin even where there may have been repentance. The elders may administer public censure whenever in their judgment either public misconduct (Gal. 2:11-14; 1 Tim. 5:20), patterns of sin (Titus 1:12, 13), or serious doctrinal error (Titus

1:10-13) pose a significant threat to the godliness, unity or testimony of the congregation. Those who humbly receive the word of public reproof, own and confess their sin, and manifest a transformed life (Prov. 28:13) shall afterward be publicly commended for their godly repentance (2 Cor. 7:7-11). If the reproof is not heeded, further discipline may be imposed.

ii. Suspension

Some misconduct on the part of a member is so detrimental to the unity, holiness and testimony of the church that the Lord requires the suspension of some of the privileges of membership (Rom. 16:17-20; 2 Thess. 3:6-15). In all cases of suspension the offending person is still to be regarded as a brother in Christ and as a member of the church. Therefore, in accordance with the procedures outlined below for each of the five major categories of offenses, the elders shall at a business meeting of the church recommend that the offending member be suspended, specifying its grounds. To be valid, an act of suspension must have the approval of at least two-thirds of the members present and voting. In the interest of maintaining a climate of holiness and peace, the elders shall have the right, at their sole discretion, to impose a temporary suspension upon a member which will bar him from not more than one Lord's Table while they deliberate the most prudent course of action. The major categories of sin which require suspension are as follows:

a. A Stubborn Private Offender (Matt. 18:15-17)

When a private offense remains unresolved even after the method prescribed by our Lord in Matt. 18:15, 16 has been graciously and prayerfully followed, it is considered an aggravated offense. The brethren involved shall bring the matter to the elders who, if they judge the matter to be serious and cannot persuade the brother to repent, shall report the situation to the church, and recommend that the stubborn brother be suspended (Matt. 18:17a). If, even after a period of suspension, the person remains adamant in his sin, excommunication shall be enacted according to the procedure outlined in Paragraph D, iii, of this Article. (Matt 18:17b).

b. Divisive Teachings or Behavior (Rom. 16:17-20; Titus 3:10)

When after admonition a member persists in the propagation of serious doctrinal error contrary to the Scripture and our Confessions of Faith, or attempts to sow discord among the membership contrary to the Scripture and this Constitution, he may be suspended as a factious man. Since every member is responsible to help preserve the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:1f.), no member is to conceal such flagrantly divisive behavior, but rather to reprove it, and disclose it to the elders (Deut. 13:6f.; 1

Cor. 1:10, 11). Whenever the elders become aware of such divisive behavior, they are to confront it meekly and patiently according to the Word of God (1 Cor. 1:10-4:21; Titus 3:10). If, even after receiving repeated admonition from the elders, a member persists in such behavior, the elders shall report the situation to the church and recommend that the divisive brother be suspended. If, even after a period of suspension, the person remains impenitent, excommunication shall be enacted according to the procedure outlined in Paragraph D, iii, of this Article.

c. A Scandalous Sin

If a member has sinned scandalously but shows hopeful signs of repentance, including submission to the elders, it may still be prudent to suspend him for a time so that he may clearly manifest repentance (Matt. 3:8), so that reproach not be brought upon the Name of Christ and the church (2 Sam. 12:14; Rom. 2:24), and so that others may not be emboldened to sin (1 Tim. 5:20). If fruits worthy of repentance are not forthcoming, the elders may recommend to the church at a later date that this person be excommunicated according to the procedure outlined in Paragraph D, iii, of this Article.

d. Contempt of Church Discipline

If a person is accused or suspected of a sin requiring corrective discipline, yet absents himself from the meetings of the church, or refuses to meet with the elders so that the matter may be investigated, such a person may be suspended (Matt. 18:17; Num. 16:12, 20, 23-27). The elders may recommend to the church at a later date that this person be excommunicated according to the procedure outlined in Paragraph D, iii, of this Article.

iii. Excommunication.

- a. In addition to the excommunication of those who have been previously suspended, some expressions of sin (ethical or doctrinal) are so gross and heinous in nature that preliminary actions like public reproof and suspension are inappropriate. In such cases, the guilty member may be immediately excommunicated by the church (1 Cor 5:1-4). This severe measure is to be employed when both aggravated lawlessness is discovered, and there are no hopeful signs of repentance. This severe measure is designed to purge the lawbreaker of his lethal attachment to his sin, unto a sincere and enduring repentance (1 Cor 5:5; 6:9-11). The elders, therefore, having made earnest but unsuccessful efforts to bring the offender to true repentance and reformation,

shall report the same to the church and recommend that the offender be excommunicated.

- b. All acts of excommunication must be executed by the gathered church (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:4). To be valid, an act of excommunication must have the approval of at least two thirds of the members present and voting.
- iv. Discipline and submission to government. Any action that the State deems a reportable offense and that does not violate biblical commands (Dan. 6:6-10), will be reported to the proper governing authorities to be dealt with accordingly. The church is obligated by the state and Scripture in order that they may not be held legally or morally accountable as a knowing party of illegal or grossly immoral sin. (Rom 13:1-3)

v. *Restoration*

Since one purpose of church discipline is to restore a fallen brother or sister, it is the duty of the church to forgive and to restore to full membership a suspended or excommunicated member who gives satisfactory evidence of his repentance (2 Cor 2:6-8). This shall be done in a duly convened business meeting of the church by no less than two thirds of the members present and voting.